

CH-162
Key House
Port Tobacco vic.
Private

circa 1850

Erected circa 1850, the Key House presents an unusual single-pile 1-3/4-story form. Flanked at either gable end by substantial exterior end chimneys, the house is currently in poor condition.

The Key House is significant for its association with a family of freed African-American slaves who inherited the land and a right to a house from their master, the owner of "Rose Hill." It is believed that the house was erected for the freed slaves circa 1850, after they sued the executor's of their former owner's estate for negligence in not carrying out his wishes. The house has a unique design that includes two exterior gable end chimneys and a 3/4 story above.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-162

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Key House

Common/other name _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 6950 Rose Hill Road not for publication _____
city or town Port Tobacco vicinity X state Maryland code MD
county Charles code 017 zip code 20677

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

N/A

=====

4. National Park Service Certification

N/A

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes _____ Name of Listing _____

No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT Sub: _____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century Vernacular

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation pier: brick/stone?

roof side gable: metal sheets

walls wood frame: asphalt sheets ("brick-tex")

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

=====
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance circa 1850

Significant Dates circa 1850

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation African American

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records. Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 278.75 acres**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The property is designated as Parcel 14 on Map 43, Grid 4 on the Charles County Property Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Key House has been associated with Parcel 14, Map 43 since its construction circa 1850.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date May 30, 1999
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

=====

12. Property Owner

=====

name Compton Incorporated (contact: Calvin Compton)
street & number P.O. Box 338 telephone 301-932-0910
city or town Port Tobacco state MD zip code 20677

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Section 7 Page 1

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====

Erected circa 1850, the Key House presents an unusual single-pile 1-3/4-story form. Flanked at either gable end by substantial exterior end chimneys, the house was possibly built for a group of former slaves of nearby "Rose Hill" owner, Ignatius Semmes.

The house occupies a 279-acre tract on the east side of Rose Hill Road. The house stands east of the road, approximately 100 yards back facing west. The building is in a dilapidated state and small trees and underbrush have grown up adjacent to the building.

The house is rectangular in plan and includes a 1-story frame wing on its north gable end. Standing atop a brick pier foundation, the dwelling features a side gable roof covered with metal sheeting and irregularly arranged bays. The frame walls have been reclad with "brick-tex" asphalt sheets, but were original clad in wood weatherboard. The two exterior end chimneys are both severely deteriorated. Their stacks do not extend above the roof line. Both front and rear doors were once sheltered by deteriorated hoods that were likely added in the 20th century.

The facade is irregularly pierced by four bays, three windows and a door. Two of the windows which contain 6/6 wood sash, light the north room, while the main entrance opens into the south room of the first story. The entry contains a 20th century single-leaf panel-and-light wood door. The third window opens south of the entrance. No windows light the upper story along this or the opposite elevations.

The gable ends are broken only by two 4-light wood casement windows located on either side of the chimney stacks. These small apertures provide the only daylight to the upper rooms.

The rear, or east, elevation contains only three bays. A single-leaf vertical board door is located in the northernmost bay, while two single windows pierce the south end of the wall. Both windows contain 6/6 wood sash.

The 1-story, north addition consists of a rectangular, gable-roofed frame structure sitting on a brick pier foundation. The wing contains one 6/6 sash window on each elevation, and a single-leaf panel-and-light wood door on its east face.

The building consists of three interior first floor rooms and a upper story that was inaccessible at the time of the survey. One of the first floor rooms occupies the north end wing. The main

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Section 7 Page 2

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====

building is split into two first floor rooms, nearly equal in size. Both rooms are clad in vertical board paneling with match stick paneling covering the ceilings. The southwest corner of the north room contains an enclosed dogleg stair that rises steeply to the upper floor. Both fireboxes are adorned by simple mantel shelves with no accompanying surrounds.

The dwelling is accompanied by several 20th century barns that were not recorded at the time of the survey. The barns are now a part of Compton Bus Services's school bus dispatch lot.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Section 8 Page 1

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====

The Key House is significant for its association with a family of freed African-American slaves who inherited the land and a right to a house from the owner of "Rose Hill." It is believed that the house was erected for the freed slaves circa 1850, after they sued the executor's of their former owner's estate for negligence in not carrying out his wishes. The house has a unique design that includes two exterior gable end chimneys and a 3/4 story above.

The dwelling was erected on a portion of "Rose Hill" (see CH-1) that was owned by Ignatius Semmes in the early-to-mid 19th century. Semmes died without children in 1843. His will delineates the distribution of his belongings between his relatives and servants. First, he directed that his executor, Walter Mitchell, Esq., run the farm for the benefit of his Aunt Sarah Floyd and her children until the children reached maturity, at which time, the property would be given to them. Second, he released several of his slaves from bondage and gave them each \$300. These slaves included his servant, Monica and her daughters, Nancy & Mary Cecily, along with her grandchildren, Rosanna, Madison and Mary. In addition, he freed his carpenter, William Stonestreet. Finally, he ordered that a "good substantial frame house with one brick chimney" be built, and, along with two adjacent acres of land, given to these freed slaves for their use.

Apparently, the executor, Mitchell, delayed in complying with this wish, provoking the freed slaves to sue him for failing to erect the house.¹ At some point, around 1850, the former slaves succeeded in acquiring the house, however it is unclear whether they were ever given ownership of the property and house. The land records do not record the Cecily name, and the later deeds associated with the property show that it was held by Semmes's heirs, Olivia Floyd and Mary (Floyd) Piet.

In 1922, the property was sold at auction after Mary Piet and her husband, John B. Piet defaulted on a mortgage made in 1898. The two tracts were purchased by Irving H. Willett who lived on the property until 1939, when he sold a portion to Bessie F. Hickey.

¹ Information appears in entry CHAS-162, "Key House," In *Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory: Volume One, Lower Southern Maryland*, Maryland Historical Trust, 1973. Supporting documentation, including records of this case were not located during this survey & documentation project.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Section 8 Page 2

Key House
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Calvin Compton purchased the property, including the house, in 1949. Tenants occupied the house for several decades before the building was abandoned. When Compton acquired it, he installed electricity and kerosene stoves, and reclad the exterior with asphalt sheeting.

The current owner is Calvin L. Compton's son who runs a school bus dispatch service from there.

Further research is necessary to verify the linkage between Semmes's freed slaves and the construction of this dwelling.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Agricultural-Industrial Transition,
1815-1870

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

SOCIAL/EDUCATION/CULTURAL
ARCHITECTURE

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====
Chain of Title:

June term 1827: Will of Ignatius Semmes (Sr.)
Devises his "Rose Hill" estate to
his son, Ignatius Semmes
Charles County Register of Wills
Liber WDM 15 Folio 240

June 13, 1843: Will of Ignatius Semmes
1.) Devises his farm "Rose Hill" to
Walter Mitchell, Esq., his executor,
to be held in trust for his Aunt
Sarah Floyd's children after they
have all reached age 21.
2.) "I manumit and leave free my
servant Monica, her daughters, Nancy
Cecily & Mary, her grandchildren,
Rosanna Cecily, Madison & an infant,
Mary and my negro carpenter, William
Stonestreet... and I give and devise
to each one of the negroes so
aforesaid manumitted and left free,
the sum of \$300..." and "I direct
that my executor shall cause to be
erected on some part of my farm
called "Rose Hill" (the place to be
selected by the above mentioned
manumitted negroes) **a good
substantial frame house with one
brick chimney**, which house together
with two acres of land adjoining
thereto, I give and devise to the
above named manumitted negroes...."
Charles County Register of Wills
Liber DJ 16 Folio 294

June 26, 1890: Olivia Floyd to (her sister), Mary
Piet, wife of John B. Piet
88.5 acres
Part of a tract known as "Rose Hill"
near Port Tobacco
Charles County Land Records
Liber JST 3 Folio 412

December 15, 1922: W. Mitchell Digges, Assignee to

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Key House
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====

Irving H. Willett
Public sale held as result of
default on mortgage between John B.
Piet, et al. and Metropolitan
Savings Bank of Baltimore (July 27,
1898, BGS 9, folio 125)
\$6200
Part of "Rose Hill"
Two tracts: A) 285.5 acres
B) 88.5 acres
Times-Crescent ad: "The...property
is improved by a comfortable
dwelling house and all necessary out
buildings...." (October 20, 1922)
Charles County Land Records
Liber WMA 39 Folio 694

Parcel 1:

July 13, 1939:

Irving H. Willett to Bessie F.
Hickey
285.5 acres
Charles County Land Records
Liber WMA 70 Folio 524

April 6, 1949:

William J. Hickey, et ux. to Calvin
L. & Margaret Compton
Part of "Rose Hill" north and east
of public road
285.5 acres
Charles County Land Records
Liber 88 Folio 378

Parcel 2:

May 21, 1974:

Louise Rossiter Wooddy to Calvin L.
& Margaret Compton
90.095 acres on east side of Rose
Hill Road
Charles County Land Records
Liber 342 Folio 286

December 27, 1978:

Calvin L. & Margaret W. Compton to
Compton, Inc.
285.5 acres + 90.095 acres + 1 acre
Known as "Rose Hill" or "Part of

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-162

Key House

name of property

Charles County, Maryland
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=====

Rose Hill" On north and east side of
public road from Port Tobacco to
Glymont, "formerly occupied by Gwynn
P. Oliver, now occupied by Irving H.
Willettt"

Charles County Land Records
Liber 624 Folio 144

M. HISTORICAL TRUST
E. 704
ANNAPOLIS, MD. 21404NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:

COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

KEY HOUSE

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

ROSE Hill Rd. - from ENTRANCE to ROSE Hill - E

CITY OR TOWN:

Port Tobacco

STATE

Md.

CODE

COUNTY:

CHAS.

CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes:	Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>		
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:

MRS.

Key

STREET AND NUMBER:

ROSE Hill Rd.

CITY OR TOWN:

LA PLATA / PORT TOBACCO

STATE:

MD.

CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Chas. Co.

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

LaPlata

STATE

Md.

CODE

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:

Federal ☐State ☐County ☐Local ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE

STATE:

COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Small 1 storey (+ ?) dwelling.
 "A" roof = ridge running N to S.
 3 bays front - center door.
 Unusual distance bet. windows
 tops + eave cornice. May be
 log beneath shingle.
 Front faces W.
 Single chimney exterior each
 gable end.
 (done from ROSE Hill Rd.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian ☐16th Century ☐18th Century ☐20th Century ☐15th Century ☐17th Century ☐19th Century ☒

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal ☐Education ☐Political ☐Urban Planning ☐Prehistoric ☐Engineering ☐

Religion/Phi-

Other (Specify) ☐Historic ☐Industry ☐losophy ☐Agriculture ☐Invention ☐Science ☐Art ☐Landscape ☐Sculpture ☐Commerce ☐Architecture ☐

Social/Human-

Communications ☐Literature ☐itarian ☐Conservation ☐Military ☐Theater ☐Music ☐Transportation ☐

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: <i>J. Richard Pivone</i>		
ORGANIZATION: <i>MHT</i>	DATE: <i>6/26/70</i>	
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN: <i>Conroy</i>	STATE: <i>md.</i>	CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

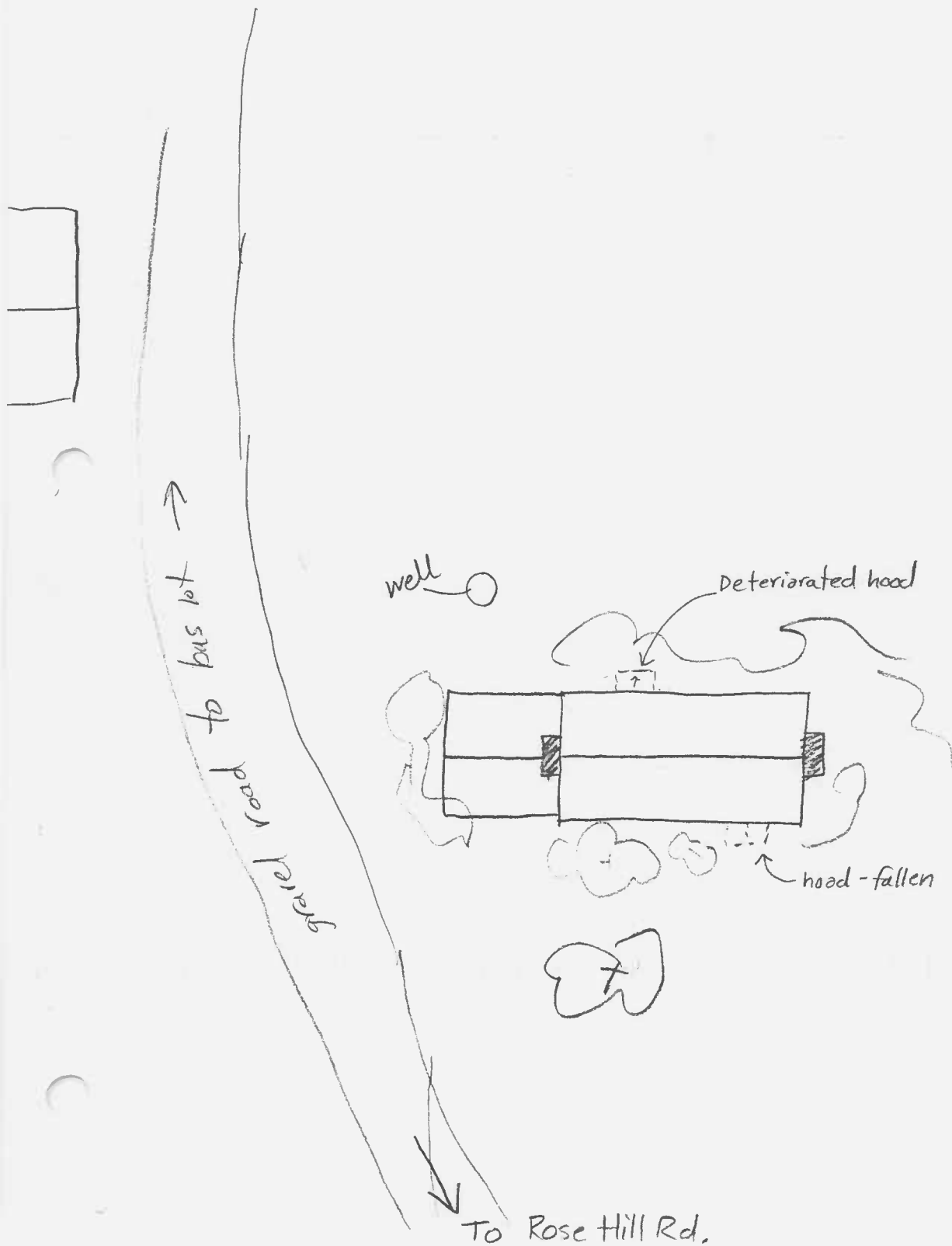
Date _____

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

3/99

KEY HOUSE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
PORT TOBACCO VIC,

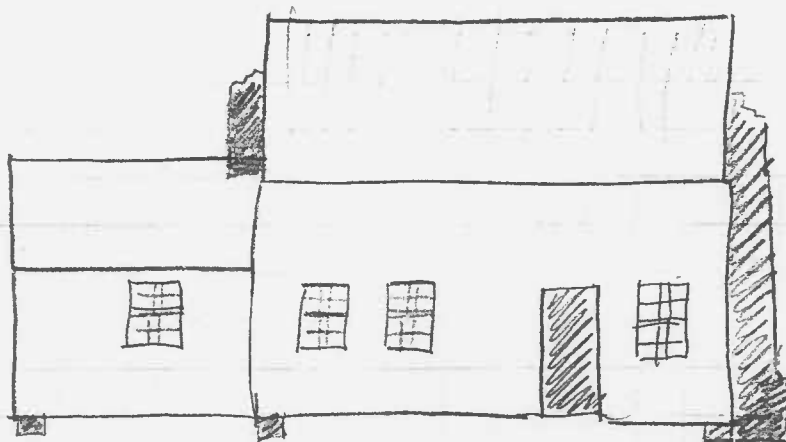
CH-162



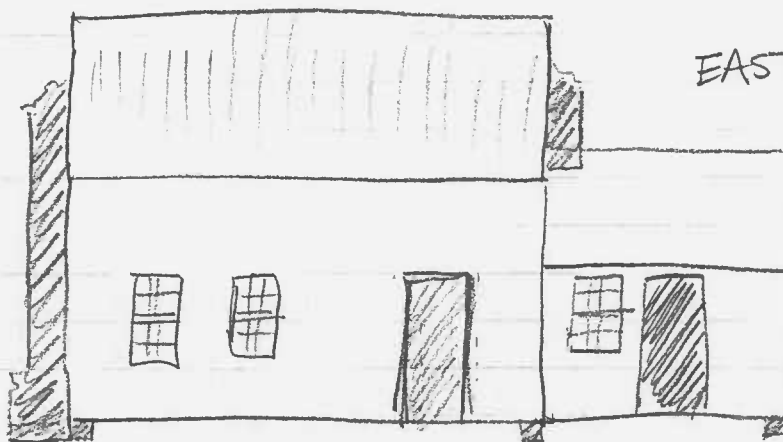
SKETCH ELEVATIONS

KEY HOUSE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
6950 Rose Hill Rd.
Port Tobacco vic.

CH-162

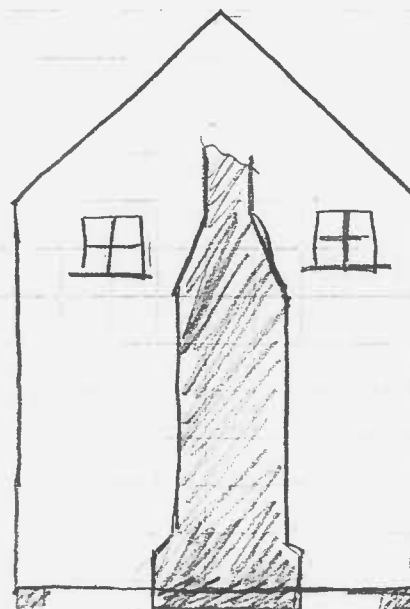


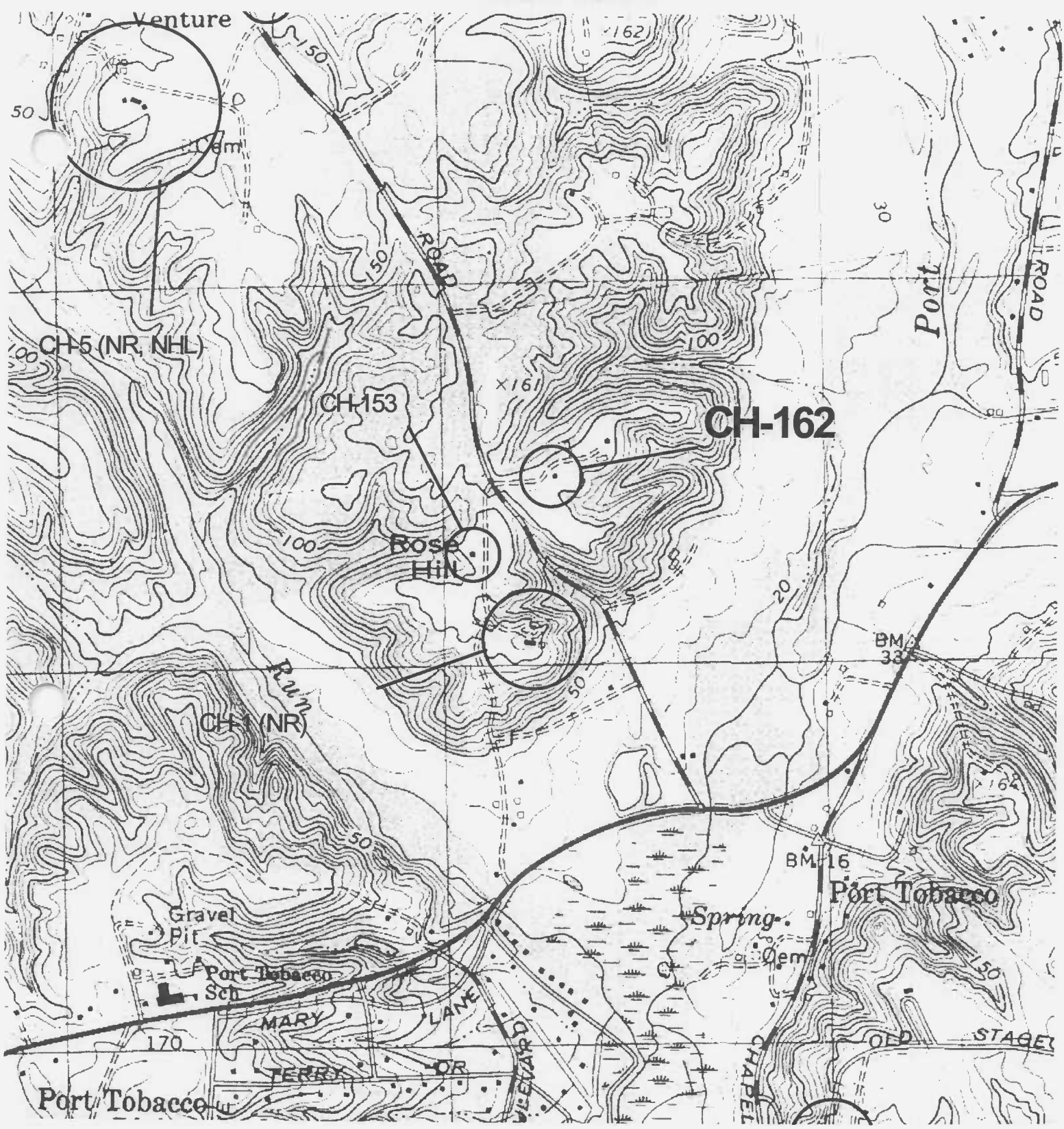
WEST ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

SOUTH GABLE
END





Key House
Charles County, MD

CH-162

PORT TOBACCO, MD QUAD



CH-162

KEY HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

R.G. SMITH

3/99

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING SE

1 OF 5



CH-162

KEY HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

3/99

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING SW

2 OF 5



CH-162

KEY HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

3/99

MARYLAND SHPD

SOUTH GABLE END

3 OF 5



CH-162

KEY HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

3/99

MARYLAND SHPO

BASE OF NORTH CHIMNEY

4 OF 5



CH-162
KEY HOUSE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
K.G. SMITH

3/99
MARYLAND SHPO
INTERIOR - NORTH ROOM, LOOKING SE
5 OF 5